

Blessed is the King
Luke 19:28-40
April 10, 2022 (Palm Sunday)
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CenterPoint Church

Read Luke 19:28-40

"The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God will stand forever." (Isaiah 40:8)

Introduction: Grand Entrances

I don't love baseball, and I certainly don't like the New York Yankees, but I loved to watch the ending of Yankees games in the early 2000s. That's because Mariano Rivera, the ultimate closing pitcher, was usually brought for the last inning to throw his famous cutter and end the game. The opening chords of Metallica's "Enter Sandman" would play over the stadium speakers and Rivera would jog in from the dugout and the crowd just went crazy. The guys who still had to bat on the other team probably wilted. I also loved the home team introductions for the Chicago Bulls in the 90s when they won six championships with Michael Jordan and Scottie Pippen - they would turn out the lights, get the lasers going, play the Alan Parsons Project's "Sirius" music. Then the player introductions by their iconic announcer, Ray Clay, would get the crowd whipped into a frenzy.

Speaking of introductions and entrances, we have a friend of the family named Will who comes from a Catholic New England family. He married a woman whose family is Hindu. They decided that rather than choose one of their religious traditions for their wedding that they would have both. So the Hindu ceremony was in the morning and the Catholic ceremony was in the afternoon. And then the reception; it was long day, we only attended the latter half. But we saw pictures of Will's entrance into the first ceremony; apparently, it's customary for the groom to ride in on an elephant. So sure enough, outside a gym in suburban Connecticut, Will rode an elephant and made the grandest entrance of all the weddings that I've attended.

Today's passage is one of the all-time great grand entrances. It had the crowds waving and shouting, the main attraction coming to the place of action with the hype of an entire city surrounding Him. But for all the grandness of the entrance, it's also a scene of contradiction, where the expectations surrounding this Man are not quite met in the ways the crowd expected. Today is Palm Sunday and this is one of the four Gospel's accounts of Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem. What's interesting is that there is not a single mention of palm branches in Luke's account, the other 3 Gospels recorded that the crowd cut down branches to lay down on the road as Jesus passed by. Luke sees no reason to mention that detail, focusing on others. The bigger context is that this was the first day of the last week of Jesus' life. He had brought His disciples to Jerusalem for the final showdown, the events that would culminate in Good Friday and then Resurrection Sunday. And what was happening in Jerusalem? It was the Passover, a weeklong celebration of God's faithfulness to His people, Israel. Jerusalem always received a huge influx of visitors during that week - the city would swell to six times its normal size so that every room was filled, people even camped out on hillsides.¹ Jesus' entry is a major statement about God's plan and the nature of His kingship that some rejoice in, others do not understand, and others reject.

Let's look at the first eight verses to see that

I. Believers Give the King Their Possessions (vv. 28-35)

¹ <https://www.chosenpeople.com/passover-in-israel-past-and-present/>

²⁸ And when he had said these things, he went on ahead, going up to Jerusalem. ²⁹ When he drew near to Bethphage and Bethany, at the mount that is called Olivet, he sent two of the disciples,³⁰ saying, "Go into the village in front of you, where on entering you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever yet sat. Untie it and bring it here. ³¹ If anyone asks you, 'Why are you untying it?' you shall say this: 'The Lord has need of it.'" ³² So those who were sent went away and found it just as he had told them. ³³ And as they were untying the colt, its owners said to them, "Why are you untying the colt?" ³⁴ And they said, "The Lord has need of it." ³⁵ And they brought it to Jesus, and throwing their cloaks on the colt, they set Jesus on it.

Before I forget, I need to recruit a couple of volunteers: I need two of you to carve out some time this week to go over to the car dealership on 13 and get me a four door Jeep. My family is going to look at colleges and visit family the week after Easter, so if you could just grab one of the four-door Jeeps that's brand new, no mileage off the parking lot, that'd be excellent. Don't pay for it, just drive off in it and bring it to me, I'll return it eventually. Oh, and if anybody stops you, just tell them "The Pastor has need of it." Can I get two volunteers for that? Can you imagine if two of you actually did that, and went to the car dealer and cautiously walked onto the lot and looked around for a brand-new Jeep, and then got in and started it up? But then one of the salesmen runs over and yells, "What are you doing? Why are you taking this Jeep?" And you just said, "The Pastor has need of it." And they just said, "OK, sure, the keys are in it."²

Darrell Bock says that there is a cultural background for Jesus just borrowing this colt that makes it not very unusual. It's called *angaria*, the right of dignitaries, leaders, and even rabbis to use others' property for personal reasons.³ So it's possible that Jesus just sent the two men to a person's house where He knew the owners of the colt would be open to allowing Him to use it. Other commentators say that's it's most likely that Jesus had arranged with the owners of the colt ahead of time. We see later in Luke 22 that there is a similar deal where Jesus sent Peter and John to find a man carrying water and just tell him that the Teacher needs his guest room for the Passover meal, and he'll take you to his upper room and you can get started preparing it. But I'm not sure why Luke would tell these stories if they were just prearranged plans, and it doesn't seem that the owners would have had to ask "*Why are you untying the colt?*" I think that Jesus was showing His godly trait of omniscience/His ability to know everything, and demonstrating that His sheep know His voice and His people are willing to have Him exercise His kingship by serving Him.

I don't know how many of you are "city slickers" like me and see nothing peculiar about the end of verse 30 – "*a colt... on which no one has ever yet sat.*" OK, no one's ever sat on this colt. Is this one of those things like the sacrifices in the OT had to be spotless lambs? I don't think so. But think about this: colts, young horses that have never been ridden on generally don't just sit there and let the first person who gets on them have a nice peaceful ride. No, they're gonna buck and kick and try to toss that person off.⁴ And if not when the person first sits on them, then definitely when they are led into the midst of a screaming mob of people! They are going to get nervous and start trying to run away. But not this one. This donkey did its job because its true owner sat on it.

The next three verses record the triumphal entry as the
II. Disciples Give the King Their Praise (vv. 36-38)

² Adapted from Ricky Jones' sermon "The Rise of the King" from March 24, 2013 found at riveroakstulsa.com.

³ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), p. 492.

⁴ <https://www.nwhorse.com/colt-starting-success-tips/>

³⁶ And as he rode along, they spread their cloaks on the road. ³⁷ As he was drawing near—already on the way down the Mount of Olives—the whole multitude of his disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen, ³⁸ saying, “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

Earlier in Jesus’ public ministry we read stories where He was telling people not to spread the news about Him. Back in chapter 5, he had told a leper that he had healed not to tell anyone; then in chapter 9 He swore the disciples to secrecy about His identity. And now, He’s entering the high, holy city of Jerusalem the week that it was filled with visitors, Jewish pilgrims from all over the place who were there to celebrate the Passover feast. Jesus didn’t sneak into the city, He made a scene. He allowed His followers to spread their cloaks on the road and yell for Him. It was all a matter of timing, right? There was always a plan and a schedule to follow. Jesus knew the time that He was to be preaching, healing, gathering followers, and doing the works of ministry. But now the time had come to have the big showdown with the religious leaders and allow Himself to be arrested and killed. What we see in this passage is something that the prophets often did: when people didn’t understand or stopped listening to their words, they would resort to dramatic action that would get the same message across. So you have the prophet Ahijah in 1 Kings 11 cutting his garment into 12 pieces to symbolize Israel’s 12 tribes being torn apart; then Jeremiah wearing a strap around his neck to symbolize Babylon’s impending enslaving of Israel; and Ezekiel shaving his beard and head to symbolize the upcoming judgment on Jerusalem. Jesus used this entrance into Jerusalem riding in on that colt to communicate visually that He is the Messiah; the King had come.

How would a triumphant King enter a city in those days? Dressed to the nines with a huge procession, riding a war horse. How was Jesus entering the city? Yes, there was a procession, but riding a beast of burden, a colt, was a deliberate choice for Jesus, to emphasize that He was not the conquering, political king that the people hoped He would be. He was a greater King than that, one who claims all of creation, not just one nation. He came humbly and submissively, allowing Himself to be arrested and killed. And all of this fulfilled the prophecy from Zechariah that we read in the Responsive Reading: “Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey” (9:9).

What does the spreading their cloaks on the road mean? It’s symbolic of their submitting to Him. “Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord” is a line from Psalm 118, which is one of the “Psalms of Ascent” that were sung by the people as they made their way up to Israel to worship. The original text only says “blessed is he” not “blessed is the King,” so His followers had changed the words. What’s interesting is that in Matthew 21:10-11 it says, “And when he entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred up, saying, ‘Who is this?’ And the crowds said, ‘This is the prophet Jesus, from Nazareth of Galilee.’” So there is a split opinion: either Jesus is just a prophet or He is a King. We could have a longer discussion of how Jesus embodies the offices of Prophet, Priest, and King, but that’s not the point. The point is that there is confusion: the crowd was more comfortable with Him just being a prophet, while His disciples were acknowledging Him as the King. And then there were the religious leaders who saw Him as a false teacher. But they would be countered by the fact that

III. All Creation Gives the King Its Praise (vv. 39-40)

³⁹ And some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to him, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples.” ⁴⁰ He answered, “I tell you, if these were silent, the very stones would cry out.”

If you’ve ever heard the music from the old Broadway play, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, you know that one of the songs, “Hosanna,” has an extended version of these two verses. So you have in one verse the Caiaphas high priest character with his deep booming voice singing to Jesus: “Tell the rabble to

be quiet, we anticipate a riot / This common crowd is much too loud / Tell the mob who sing your song that they are fools and they are wrong / They are a curse, they should disperse.” And then Jesus answers in the next verse: “Why waste your breath moaning at the crowd? / Nothing can be done to stop the shouting / If every tongue were stilled the noise would still continue / The rocks and stones themselves would start to sing.”

John’s Gospel records a lot more of the Pharisees conversations and intentions towards Jesus. We read in John 11 after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, that the chief priests and Pharisees met together and discussed, *“What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation”* (John 11:47). You can hear the panic in those words, right? *“We have to do something or He’ll win over the crowds and Rome will crack down hard on us. Everything’s getting out of control!”* These are the scared thoughts of men who have grown accustomed to their power and don’t want anything to disrupt their positions. They acknowledged that *“this man performs many signs”* – really?!? He just brought a man back from the dead after he had been buried for several days. That’s more than a sign, that’s a miracle. Maybe if they were open to the fact that God was doing something in their midst, they wouldn’t have felt so threatened. This is all the same impulse that led them to say in verse 39 of Luke’s text *“Teacher, rebuke your disciples.”*

If the people weren’t going to praise Jesus and recognize that He was the King who had come in God’s name, then God would make sure it was announced somehow. Nature would cry out, the stones would bear witness to who Jesus was. If you remember the story of Balaam and his donkey talking to him in the book of Numbers, maybe the colt that Jesus was riding would have proclaimed that Jesus was the true King. The Old Testament tells us that nature does glorify God: Isaiah 55:12 – *“... the mountains and the hills before you shall break forth into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.”* Psalm 19:1 – *“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.”* Because ultimately, Romans 8:19-21 says that creation is as anxious for God’s redemption as His people are: *“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.”* The only reason the rocks around Jerusalem weren’t crying out right then and there is because they were letting the people do it.

Conclusion

First point of application today: If we, the people of God, don’t praise Him, someone else or something else will. Is your life characterized by seeing the ways that God has worked, counting the ways that He’s blessed you, meditating on Scripture that tells you how great He is, and then all of that overflowing in heartfelt praise to Him? Glorify God together in corporate worship and on your own in private worship. I would add that we should be very slow to criticize the way other people worship Him. We “frozen chosen” Presbyterians like to worship Him decently and in order, for good reason; I agree with our principles of worship. But we like to make fun of charismatics or heap criticism on worship traditions that are different than us. There is room for discerning critique when Biblical principles are at stake, but I think we might be in danger of acting like the Pharisees: *“tell your disciples to stop worshipping so loudly.”* Let’s deal with our own hearts and our own response to God first, let them be responsible before Him for how they acted; maybe they could even teach us a thing or two about joy and praise. But may our lives be marked by praise.

Another application is that if every stone, and by extension every part of nature, acknowledges Jesus as Lord, it’s because He owns it all. He created it all, He rules over it all as King, and He can do

whatever He wants with His creation. The owner of the colt allowed Jesus to use it because Jesus owns everything. We need to start thinking, if we already don't think like this, that if we acknowledge Jesus as King, then everything we own is His. My family is His, my house is His, my bank account is His, my smart phone is His, my car is His. I don't expect Him to send two disciples borrow any of that stuff, but we need to think about how we can use these things that are His that we are just stewarding for His purposes. Can my house be used for hospitality and inviting people over to share a meal and the love of Jesus with them? Can my car be loaned to a family who needs it? Can I use my money to help Christ's church, to advance missions, or to feed the poor? *"When you do it for the least of these, you've done it unto me,"* Jesus said. If we're unwilling to be generous, we show that we think we own our things and Jesus has no claim on them. That's rejecting His Lordship in a very tangible way.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem fully knowing that His life would end there. Let's go back to the Pharisees' council where they were trying to figure out what to do with Jesus. Caiaphas, the high priest said this: *"It is better for you that one man should die for the people, not that the whole nation should perish"* (John 11:50). And then John commented on that: *"He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but also to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad."* Essentially, the plans of the Jewish leaders for one man to die for the whole nation was more theologically rich than they realized. They thought they were just sacrificing one person's life so that Rome wouldn't destroy many more people, so they pragmatically designated Jesus to die in everyone else's place. But God used that impulse and expanded it so that Jesus' death on the cross would save His people spiritually from their sins. His giving up His life was as a substitute in our place, to stand in the place of each one of His people and take the punishment of death that we deserve. God poured out His wrath on His beloved Son so that He could spare His people and pour out His grace and forgiveness on each one of us.

You can either choose to respond to Jesus the way that the Jewish leadership did and be in complete denial of who He is and what He's done. Or you can respond to Jesus as His disciples did and acknowledge that He is the great King who came to claim your allegiance. Yes, Jesus was a humble King who was willing to give up His life, but a day will come when He will be the glorious King returning in power. Listen to Revelation 19's account of His return: *"His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems... From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords."* Jesus will bring the full power of God's judgment with Him. Those who have denied His divinity and rejected Him will feel the brunt of His kingly judgment, while those who have recognized His deity and followed Him will be brought into His heavenly kingdom with Him. We will see him go up to take his eternal throne in the city of the new Jerusalem, the heavenly procession of our forever king. Everyone who trusts in Jesus for salvation will be part of the cheering crowd on that great day. Amen!

Benediction - 1 Chronicles 29:11-13 - *"Yours, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty, for all that is in the heavens and in the earth is Yours. Yours is the kingdom, O Lord, and You are exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor come from You, and You rule over all. In Your hand are power and might, and in Your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all. And now we thank You, our God, and praise Your glorious name."*